



From Federal Roots to Italianate Grace

A Historic Structure Report on the William M.
Valentine House

Florence Westergard



HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

William M. Valentine House
Roslyn, NY

By Florence Westergard

A landmark of Roslyn's past, the William M. Valentine House tells a story of architecture, adaptation, and community. This report uncovers its history—and outlines a path for its preservation.

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1. Project Team

Lead Author: Florence Westergard, Studio Westergard

Historical Research: Roslyn Landmark Society; Bryant Library Local History Collection; Roslyn Village Hall.

Architectural Analysis: Gerald R.W. Watland (1962 Restoration Architect); Roger Gerry (1963) guidebook

Preservation Consultant: N/A

Date of Report: April 2025

2. Executive Summary

a. Acknowledgements

This report was prepared using archival research from the National Register of Historic Places, Bryant Library Local History Collection records and historical maps. Special thanks to the staff of the Bryant Library Local History Collection and the Roslyn Landmark Society for their preservation efforts and historical documentation.

b. Purpose of the report

The William M. Valentine House, located at 1 Paper Mill Road in Roslyn, New York, is a historically significant structure that has played a central role in the village's architectural and cultural narrative. Constructed between **1795** and **1810**, the house originally exemplified the Federal style, later receiving Italianate modifications around **1865**. Over time, it has served multiple functions: from a private family residence to a community facility, and currently, as part of the Bryant Library Annex.

This Historic Structure Report (HSR) documents the architectural evolution, historical significance, and current condition of the William M. Valentine House. Through detailed archival research, field documentation, and physical investigation, it presents a chronological and physical overview of the structure, offering a comprehensive reference for ongoing stewardship.

The report also reflects Roslyn's ongoing commitment to preserving its historic built environment. By evaluating existing conditions and identifying preservation needs, it provides informed recommendations to guide future restoration, maintenance, and adaptive reuse. As such, this report is intended not only as a record of the past but as a planning tool for the thoughtful care and continued relevance of the Valentine House within the community.

c. Methodology

This report was created through:

- **Archival Research:** Examining historic records, National Register documentation, newspaper clippings and local archives from the Roslyn Landmark Society, the Bryant Library Local History Collection and the Village of Roslyn.
- **Site Analysis:** Reviewing structural and architectural elements through maps, plans and photographs.
- **Historical Context:** Integrating previous studies and research adapted from the Bryant Library Local History Collection and the Roslyn Landmark Society.

3. Project Data

Property Name: William M. Valentine House

Location: 1 Paper Mill Road, Roslyn, NY

Current Ownership: Bryant Library

Historic Registrations: National Register of Historic Places, Roslyn Village Historic District

Date of Construction: 1795–1810

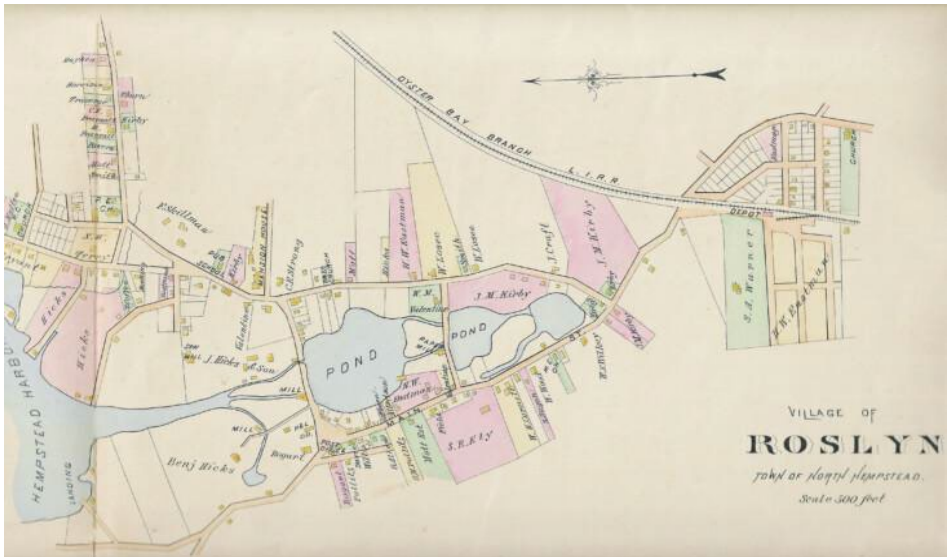
Architectural Style: Federal with later Italianate modifications

Current Use: Library Annex, offices, and meeting space

Zoning and Land Use: Part of the Roslyn Village Historic District preservation area

Historic Names: The Valentine House, Roslyn Neighborhood House, Roslyn Village Hall

4. History and Development of the Village of Roslyn¹



1891 Wolverton map of the Village of Roslyn - Courtesy of Howard Kroplick.

Originally settled by New Englanders in 1643, the village at the head of Hempstead Harbor (later renamed Roslyn) served as the Port of Entry for the Town of Hempstead. Though agriculture remained at subsistence levels for generations, Roslyn's early importance lay in its transportation role.

¹ Retrieved from 1986 National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Roslyn Village multiple Resource Area

Roslyn's first major industry was milling. Between 1698 and 1709, John Robeson established a grist mill, later joined by a sawmill and paper mill before the American Revolution. Despite early industrial activity, village growth remained modest due to limited trade.

The Revolutionary War halted progress, but by the 1790s, New York City's growing population spurred demand for Long Island's agricultural goods. Roslyn prospered as a shipping hub, and paper manufacturing became more prominent. Wealth from this era is evident in the construction of larger, stylistically refined homes, such as the Onderdonk family houses and the William Valentine House, a rare example of early Federal architecture.

In the early 1800s, Roslyn saw increased coastal trade and steady growth. By 1844, when the village was officially renamed, it had around 250 residents and a bustling harbor economy. Continued development in the mid-1800s introduced Greek Revival architecture and better transportation, including regular steamboat service and the extension of the Long Island Railroad in 1864.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries brought significant social and architectural changes. As manufacturing declined, Roslyn became a desirable residential area for wealthy estate owners, who influenced local development, including public buildings and parks. Georgian, Colonial Revival, and Neoclassical styles became popular, reflecting national trends and renewed interest in colonial heritage.

Efforts to beautify the village included transforming former industrial areas into scenic park spaces. Despite post–World War II suburbanization, Roslyn's historic core remained intact, thanks to preservation efforts led by the Roslyn Landmark Society and local ordinances.

5. Location and Access

The village of Roslyn is an incorporated village of 2,500 residents, located approximately 30 miles east of New York City on Long Island's north shore. It spans roughly 400 acres at the base of Hempstead Harbor, one of about a dozen deep-water inlets extending inland from Long Island Sound. The village lies in the lower elevations of a ravine, stretching a short distance south of the inlet's head. Its boundaries are defined by the Oyster Bay branch of the Long Island Railroad and a steep hillside to the east, Warner Avenue near the southern end of the ravine, Willis Avenue along the ridge to the west, and Northern Boulevard at the base of Hempstead Harbor to the north.



View of the Valentine House from the mill pond around 1900 – Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

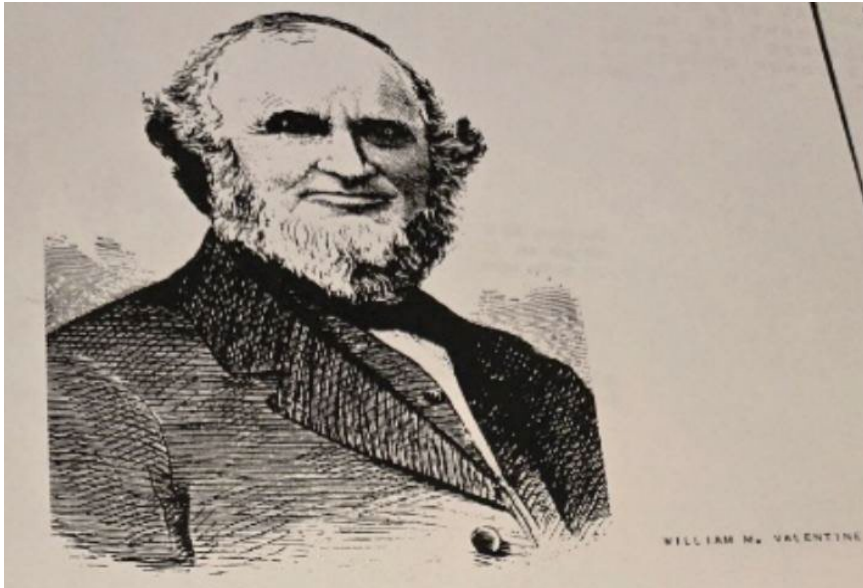
The William M. Valentine House is located at 1 Paper Mill Road, within the Roslyn Village Historic District. It occupies a picturesque setting near the Mill Pond and Gerry Park, contributing to the village's historic charm. The surrounding landscape features tree-lined streets with historic buildings, creating a period-appropriate atmosphere. Nearby landmarks include the Bryant Library and the adjacent War Memorial Building, which form part of the same cultural complex.

Situated along Paper Mill Road, the house is a reminder of Roslyn's industrial past, with the area's milling history still evident in the surrounding environment. The house was relocated in 1968, moving across the road from its original site. Though this altered its orientation, the relocation preserved its historic integrity. The property's grounds feature brick walkways, garden beds, and period-appropriate shrubbery, enhancing its aesthetic appeal. Public parking and transportation options are conveniently located nearby, making the site accessible to visitors.

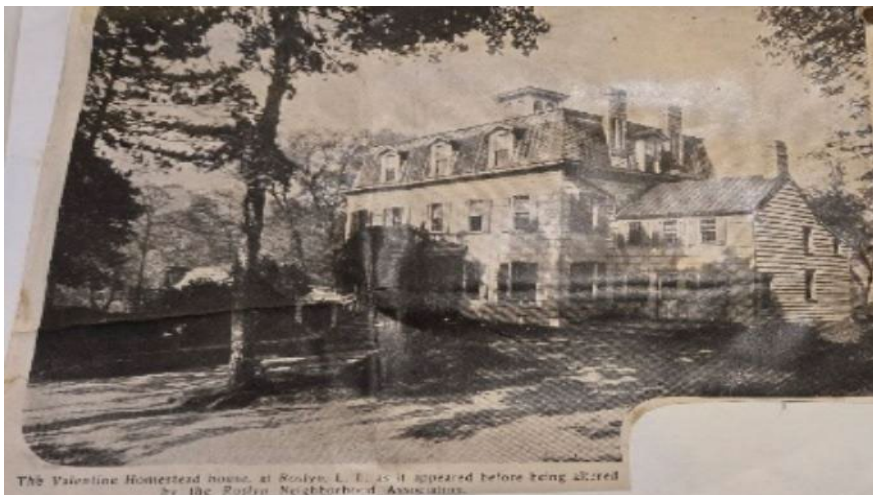


Map of Roslyn, NY with the location of the William M. Valentine house

6. Chronology of Development and Use

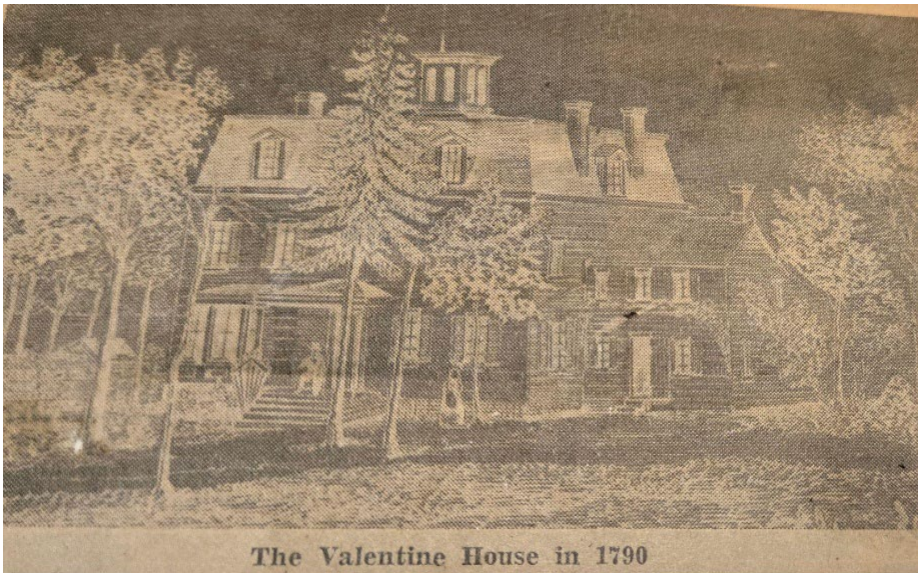


William M. Valentine



William M. Valentine house before 1915 - Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

The William M. Valentine House was built between **1795** and **1810**, possibly by William Valentine, the owner of the Roslyn Paper Mill. His father, Richard Valentine, was the King Marshall of Hempstead as early as **1674** and one of the six proprietors of the town. William Valentine played a significant role in the local economy, operating the mill with his family until 1891.



His son, William M. Valentine (**1809–1884**), a well-known merchant, lived in the house and made notable contributions to the Roslyn community.

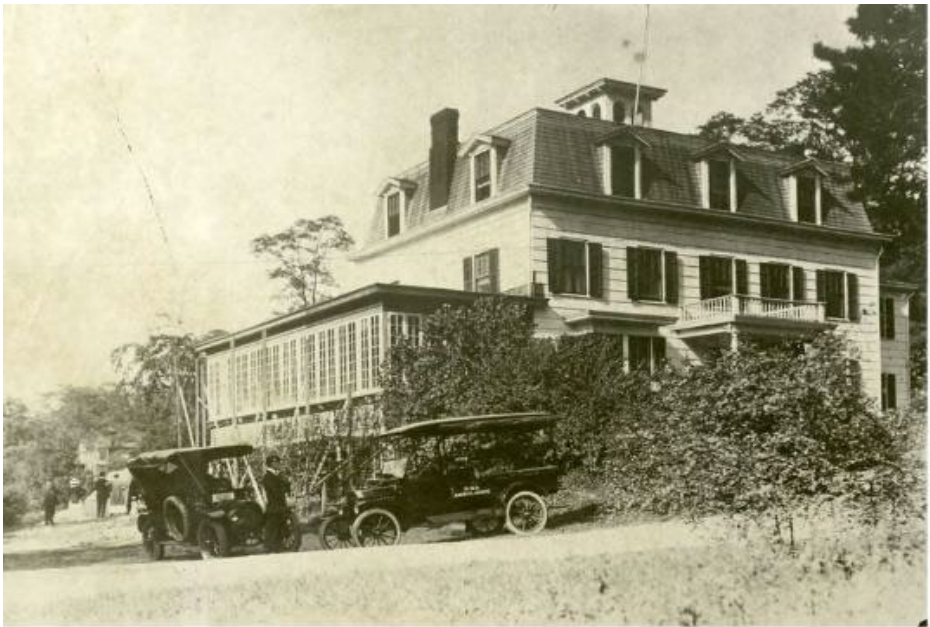
Like his ancestors, William M. Valentine initially followed the family trade of papermaking, employing many operatives and mastering the craft himself. He practiced the old-fashioned method until around **1837**, when he shifted to a mercantile career. In the mid-1800s, he built Roslyn's first brick store at the corner of Main Street and Tower Place, facing the Clocktower. This store became a local landmark, symbolizing the village's growing commercial sector, but was tragically destroyed by a fire in **2001**.

As described in the [*New York Times* on March 23, 1882](#),² Valentine was attacked near his home at the age of 73 and robbed of a small sum of money. He never fully recovered from the assault and died on July 17, **1884**. After the murder of its owner, the house passed to his widow Mary Seaman Valentine. When she died in 1911, the surrounding property was purchased by neighbors and given to the town which established a park.

In **1915**, the Roslyn Neighborhood Association acquired the property, repurposing it for civic uses. The property the Association occupied was purchased through the initiative and active efforts of Mr. John H. Love. The original cost of the property was \$4,500 (approximately \$141,000 today).

² The New York Times March 23, 1882 - Mr. William M. Valentine of Roslyn, assaulted by thieves.

During this period, the property became known as the “Neighborhood House”. During the **1916** infantile paralysis epidemic, it briefly served as a hospital for 34 victims of Poliomyelitis. The hospital was staffed with a full corps of nurses for 2 months³. Throughout the early 20th century, it housed community services, including the Visiting Nurse Association and Red Cross programs.

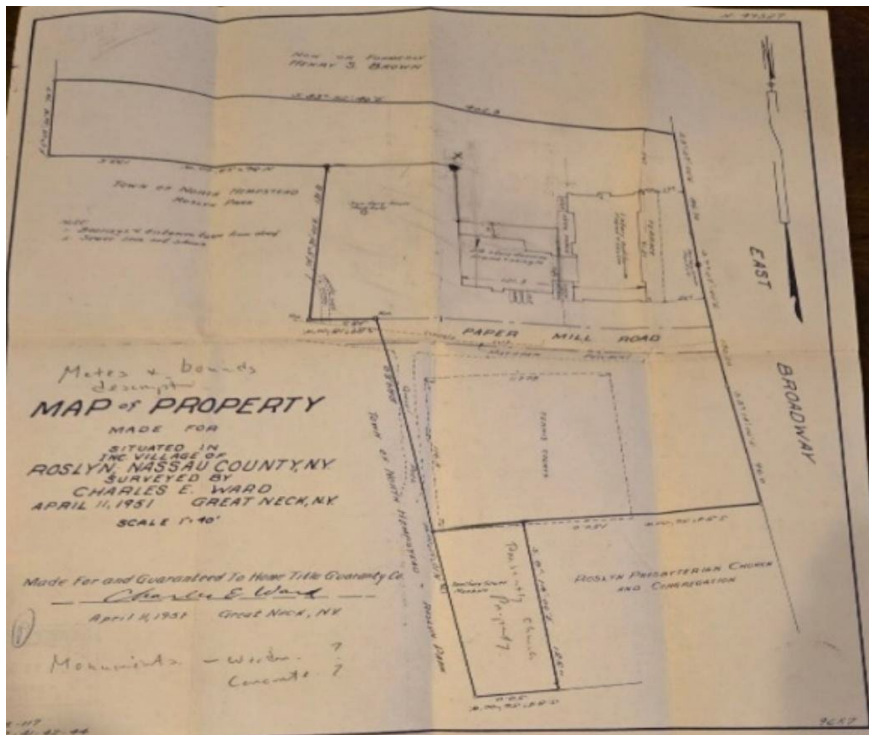


The Valentine house used as a hospital – ambulances await calls in front of the polio hospital during the 1916 epidemic. The RNA converted its quarters into a temporary hospital. Roslyn News – January 3, 1962- Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

³ The Neighborhood House - typewriting note - no date - Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

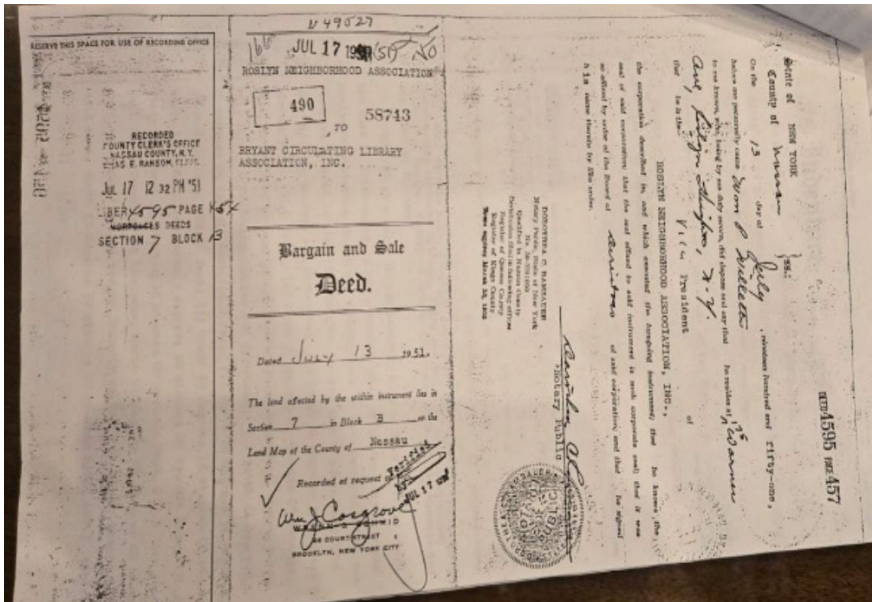


The Valentine House used by the Red Cross in 1915 – Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection



Property Map – 1951 - Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

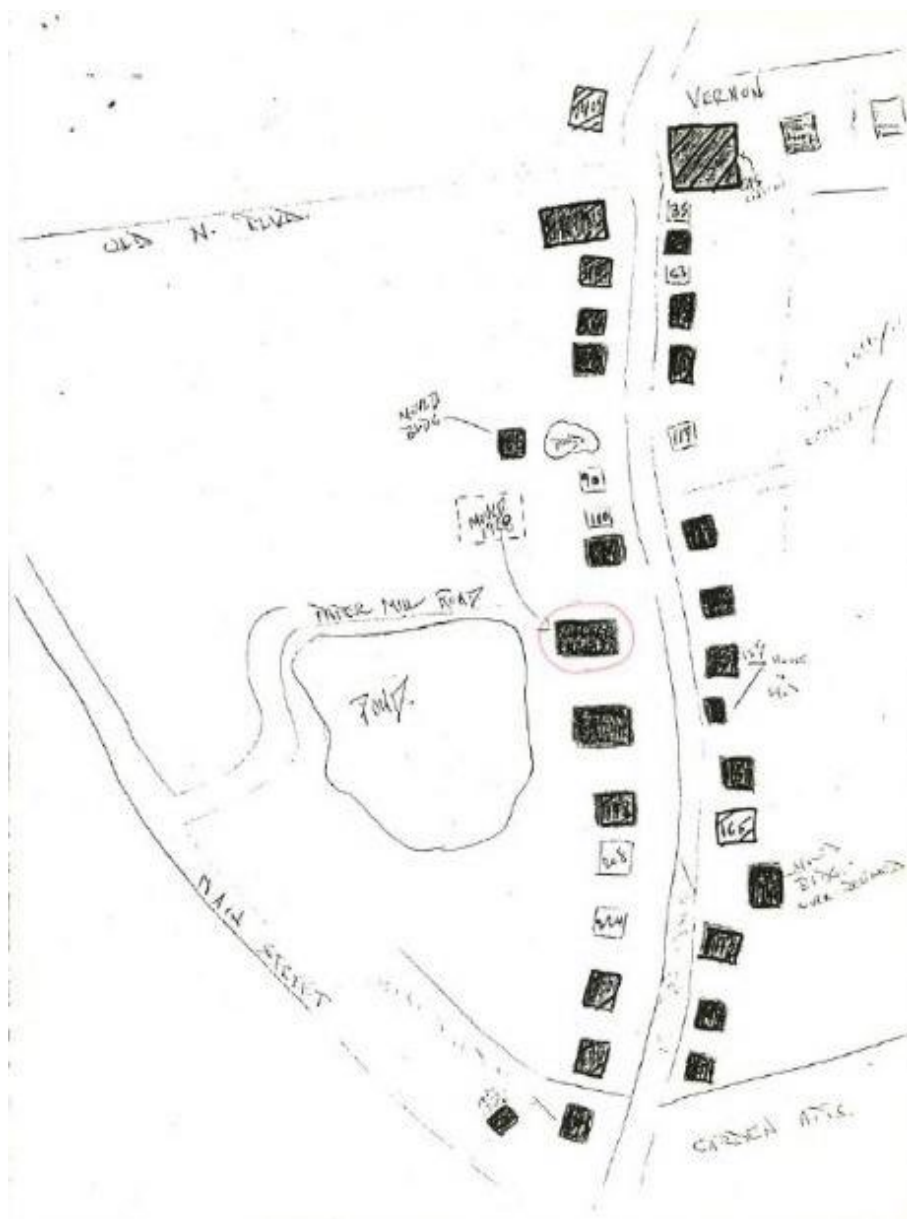
The house became part of the Bryant Library complex in 1951, later serving as Roslyn Village Hall.



Deed - 1951 between The Neighborhood house and Bryant Library – Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

In **1968**, it was relocated across Paper Mill Road.

Since **1998**, it has functioned as part of the Bryant Library Annex.



A Sketch of the location of the William M. Valentine House – Source: 1977 Building Structure Inventory Form of 1977 – Division of Historic Preservation

a. Historical Timeline (adapted from the Bryant Library)

1800: Built between 1795-1810, possibly by William Valentine, owner of the paper mill and father of William M. Valentine (1809-1884), a prominent local merchant. The Valentine family operated the mill until 1891. William M. Valentine built the first brick store in Roslyn.

1915: Acquired by the Roslyn Neighborhood Association, serving as its headquarters, known as the "Neighborhood House." It hosted the Roslyn Visiting Nurse Association, Red Cross, Boys Club, and community programs, including English classes, a hot lunch program, and Roslyn's first garbage collection service.



First Garbage Collection service - courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

- **1916:** Used as a hospital during the infantile paralysis epidemic.
- **1919:** Campaign begins to erect a War Memorial Building adjacent to the Valentine House. The cornerstone was laid on October 24, 1920.
- **1924:** The Neighborhood Association library merged with the Bryant Circulating Library Association.
- **1935-1940s:** Used in connection with theater activities at the War Memorial Building.
- **1951:** Transferred to the Bryant Library.
- **1962:** Became Roslyn Village Hall.
- **1963:** Dedication of the new Village Hall on October 6, with the ground floor restored to its original 1800s appearance under architect Gerald R.W. Watland's supervision.
- **1968:** Moved across Paper Mill Road to make room for Bryant Library expansion



All yellow dots represent historical houses in Roslyn, NY

7. Modifications and Rehabilitations over time



Picture of the William M. Valentine House as it appears in The Valentines in America, 1644-1874, by Valentine, Thomas Weston, 1818-1879 - Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center – Internet Archive

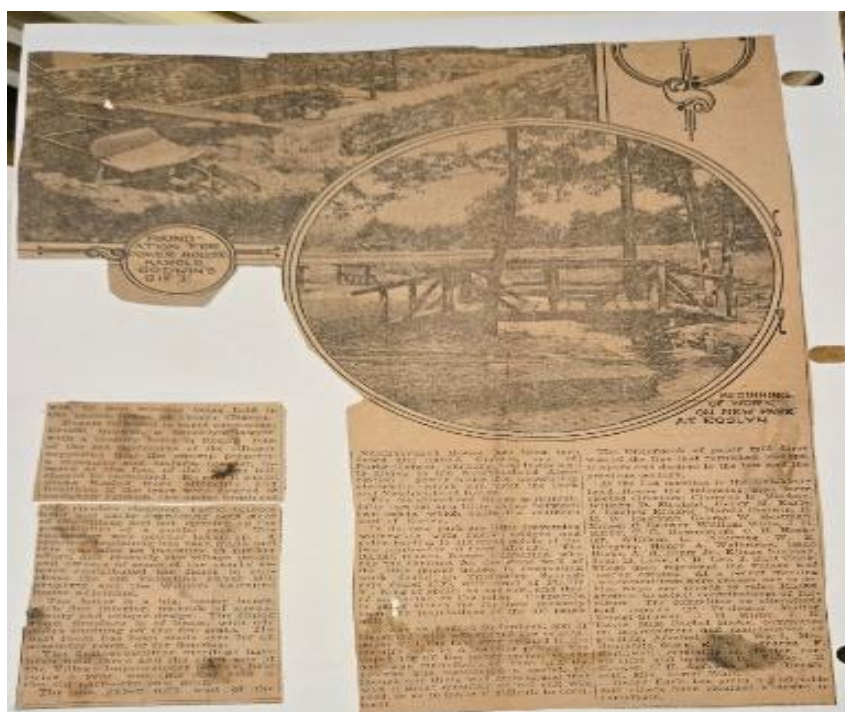
The *William M. Valentine House* has undergone significant changes throughout its history. Originally a simple 2-½ story side hall residence, it was remodeled in 1865 with Italianate modifications, including a mansard roof, dormers, and a belvedere, bringing it in line with 19th-century architectural trends.

a. 1865: Italianate Alterations

- **Exterior:**
 - The house was expanded by two bays.
 - The simple gable roof was replaced with a mansard roof with dormers and a belvedere, reflecting the Second Empire style influence. Chimneys were also added, one on the east side and a pair on the west side.
- **Interior:**
 - Despite the exterior alterations, much of the original Federal-style interior detailing was preserved, including the fireplace mantels and door surrounds.

b. 1915: Roslyn Neighbourhood House Renovation

The Roslyn Neighborhood house completed some renovations. During World War I, some large porches were added and the original, gable—ended wing was demolished and replaced by a larger, taller wing (see picture below). Shortly thereafter, this wing was shortened to permit the erection of the War Memorial (now the Bryant Library) with which it formed a connecting link. No significant alterations took place during the past forty years until the 1962 restoration.



Newspaper clippings from 1915 showing the house when it was acquired by the Neighborhood House – From the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, October 24, 1915. Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection.

The Brooklyn Daily Eagle article describes William M. Valentine House as follows:

“The latter is a big, roomy house with fine interior, mantels of special beauty and unique design. The dining room fireplace is brass, with odd doors shutting off the fire grate. The best room has been made over for an assembly room or for dancing.”



***William M. Valentine House after the Roslyn Neighborhood house Association took it over
– Circa 1916 – Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection***



c. 1920: building of a wing

The neighborhood House got attached to the Memorial building through a wing.



The Valentine House is attached to the War Memorial building circa 1920 with a connection wing. Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

After the completion of the Roslyn War Memorial, the Neighborhood House became part of the whole. It was used for community offices and the upper story provided a home for the caretaker.



Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

1937: Theatre of the Four Seasons becomes part of the WPA New York State Federal Theatre project of Long Island. The Valentine House, adjacent to the Memorial Building, was used as headquarters of the Theatre Project, including offices, studios, dressing rooms and later dormitories for actors.

1951: both the Memorial building and the Valentine house were transferred to the Bryant Library. The Roslyn Post #6105 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States occupied the building for its meetings. During that time, it fell into disuse.

In **1953**, Peggy and Roger Gerry, Preservationists in Roslyn, wrote in *Old Roslyn*⁴, the first guide produced by the Gerrys documented some of the houses in Roslyn. Here how they described the William M. Valentine house:

Many of the houses in Roslyn are older than they appear to be today, as during the years many changes, which were not always improvements, took place in the name of modernization, as styles changed, and increasing affluence made alteration possible. One of the best examples of this type of "progress" may be seen in the Valentine house, at the rear of the library, which has recently been saved from almost complete decay by the Veterans of foreign wars. The original house was built in the late 18th or early 19th century and was made longer and taller when the ballroom was added about the time of the civil war. The great enclosed porch was added as recently as in the early years of the 20th century. With its mansard roof and marble ballroom mantle, it looks today like a country house of 1875 and there remains only the simple stairway to indicate that it was built almost a century earlier.

⁴ Excerpt from *Old Roslyn*, 1953- page 15 - by Peggy and Roger Gerry. Published by the Bryant Library. Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

By **1958**, the village of Roslyn was on the verge of destruction. Many longtime families had moved away, historic homes were deteriorating, and suburban expansion across Long Island posed an existential threat to the village's character. Nassau County's 1960 development plan proposed widening Roslyn Road and two other major highways, cutting through Historic Main Street. The plan also called for filling the village's two ponds to create a large parking lot and replacing historic homes with apartment buildings—effectively turning Roslyn into a massive traffic hub.

Roger and Peggy Gerry refused to let this happen. They took immediate action, leading the effort to protect Roslyn's heritage. Their advocacy resulted in the creation of a Special Historic District in 1962, encompassing Main Street, East Broadway, and the Mill Dam.

At the same time, the William M. Valentine House had fallen into severe disrepair. To save it, the Trustees of The Bryant Library and the Incorporated Village of Roslyn joined forces. With strong support from the Gerrys, the Village agreed to move into the historic house, situated on the east side of Roslyn Park.

The Trustees agreed to lease the house for a nominal fee of one dollar per year, while the Village provided funding for its restoration. Recognizing the building's architectural and historical significance, both organizations aimed to safeguard its legacy and reintegrate it into the community.

d. 1962 Restoration

- Under the supervision of architect Gerald R.W. Watland, the ground floor rooms were restored to their circa 1800 appearance.
- The rooms were furnished with period-appropriate decor, creating museum rooms open to the public.

Note: the museum rooms were dismantled in 1987-88.

Several analyses and recommendations were made at this time. Here is the GRW Watland report⁵:

**Report on the findings and recommendations
in the house behind the Bryant library – Roslyn NY
By G.R.W. Watland. Historical architect
March 23, 1960**

The most important changes that should be made to the exterior of this house is the removal of all the excrescences that have been added to it over the years. By excrescence, I mean the long porch on the West and North sides, the belvedere on the roof and the bay window on the south. In other words, the house should be reduced to its simplest, rectangular form.

⁵ Watland, Gerald R.W. - March 23, 1960 - Report on the findings and recommendations in the house behind the Bryant library – Roslyn NY

This will cut future costs of upkeep and repair. Since none of these portions have any real use or meaning to the building, their removal will not present any hardship. I understand the library will remove the connection between it and the house.

The belvedere on the roof is in a sad state of repair and there is now a serious threat to the house in allowing rain to come through. It will only be a short time before the plaster on the third floor will be damaged seriously. I strongly recommend that it be removed entirely and the void re-framed and covered over with roofing material, so that all is watertight. The stairway leading to the belvedere could be retained leading to a hatchway, if it is thought it would be desirable to have quick access to the roof. Otherwise, it should be removed also.

The roof, the main cornice, the built-in gutter and the downspouts should all be inspected for water and weathertightness.

Depending upon what use is made of the third floor, it may be possible to remove the fire escape on the North side. It is to be hoped that this can be done.

Where porches and bay windows are removed, windows should be installed. They should match the existing windows and be centered below the existing second floor windows

The front porch is in a somewhat dilapidated condition. Since it is not original to the house it seems undesirable to spend any money on its repair. If funds are available, it would be better to remove this porch and build a new one, following 18th century design. In removal, it would be wise to check it as it is being dismantled to see if any early framing exists in the roof. If so, it would give the clue to the outline of the earlier porch

Interior Hall: *this room has retained most of its early woodwork and is consequently very pleasing. I believe Captain Gerry mentioned that he knew where the original front door was located at present. If this could be returned to the house it would be desirable. If not, a new door should be made copying the original.*

Drawing room: *this great room would be excellent for meetings. While it is not part of the earliest house, it should be retained for its usefulness in this respect. With windows substituted for the bay window and in the locations of the present French doors, the room will be returned to its 19th century appearance. If it is used as a meeting room, it will be necessary to provide a second means of egress.*

Rooms to the east of the hall: *These two rooms would serve admirably as reception rooms both before and after meetings in the bid drawing room. Captain Gerry also knows where the original mantels are for the fireplaces. If these are not available, mantles of similar design should be reinstalled. It would seem desirable to have a small wall type kitchen somewhere in this area, in order that simple refreshments could be served. New windows should be reinstalled on the East walls of these rooms.*

With the first floors reserved for meetings, it seems better to install the town clerk in offices on the second floor.

Structure Investigation in the basement reveals no serious structural weakening of the house. Some of the beams show the working of powder post beetles but the damage is negligible. A few Lally columns will give added support in strategic places.

Heating

This system should be inspected by a competent heating contractor to see if it is operating at top efficiency. It would be well to take some precautionary measures in making the boiler room more fire-proof. Antiquated radiators and valves should be replaced with modern equipment.

Plumbing

Since the men's toilet will be lost in the remodel of the connecting wing, it will be necessary to provide a new one. The women's toilet should be updated too.

Painting

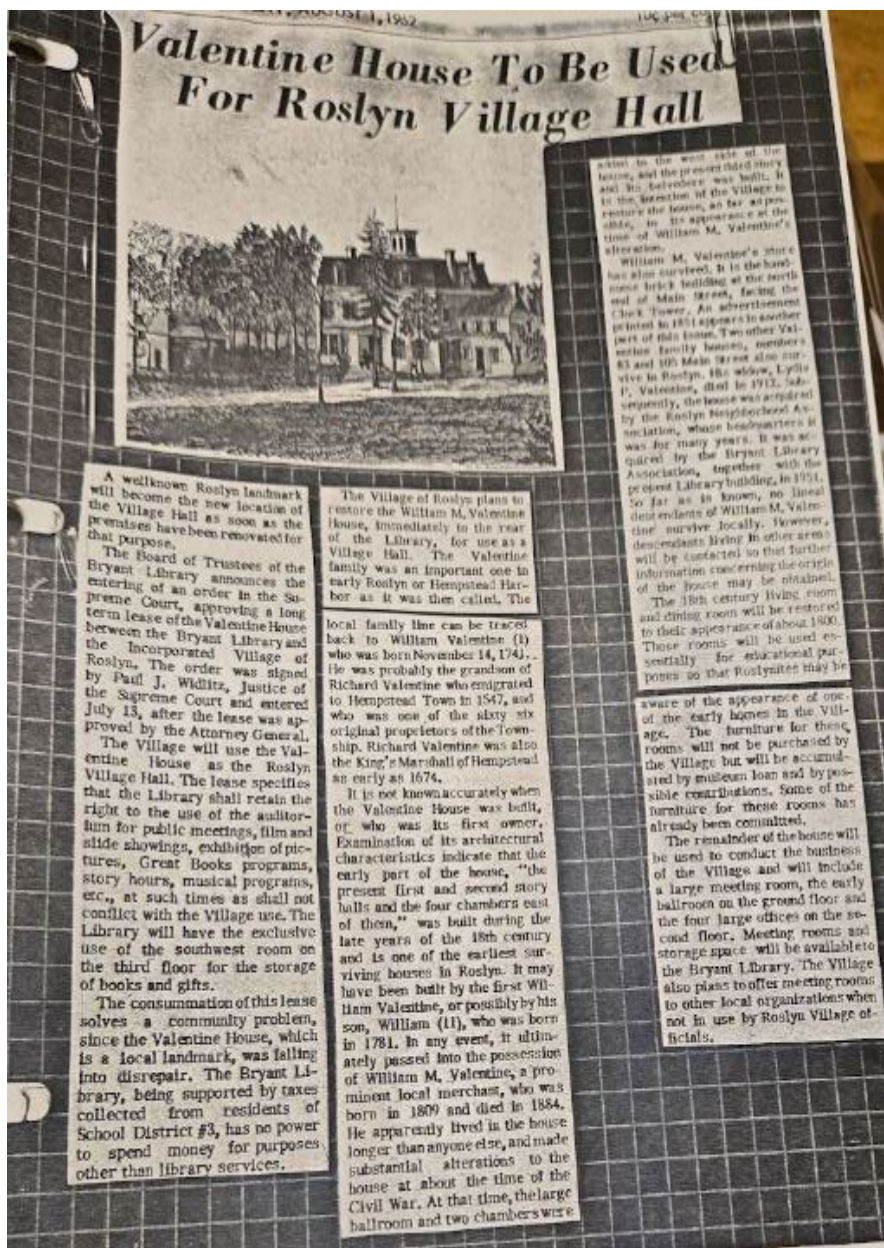
After demolition and renovation are completed both exterior and interior painting will make the house fresh and will keep appearance.

Conclusion

The renovation of this house will be worth the expenditure that it will require. It will add immeasurably to the appearance of the Roslyn Park area. Its meeting rooms facilities should be made available to all Roslyn organizations that require such space. These facilities plus the offices for the town clerk are sufficient reasons for its renovation. However, the more use the house can be put to, the more reason for its being.



Restoration in 1962 – Source: Bryant Library Local History Collection



Newspaper article – Valentine House to be used by the Village Hall – 1962 – Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

INVOICE		DESCRIPTION	TOTAL AMOUNT	DISCOUNT	FREIGHT	RET AMOUNT
DATE	NO.					
Rent for Village Hall, May 1, 1972 to April 30, 1973						1.00

INVOICE		DESCRIPTION	TOTAL AMOUNT	DEDUCTIONS		RET AMOUNT
DATE	NO.			DISCOUNT	FREIGHT	
Rent for Valentine House May 1, 1971 to April 30, 1972						1.00

V3-1
INCORPORATED VILLAGE OF ROSLYN

Rent for village hall for the amount of One dollar a month – Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

Dedication Of New Village Hall This Sunday

All residents of this area have been invited by village officials to join in a reception to dedicate the new Roslyn Village Hall this Sunday, Oct. 6th from 2 to 6 P.M. Also asked to attend the event, are the officials of nearby communities, the Town and County, as well as representatives of local civic and other organizations.

The Roslyn Village Hall, formerly the William Valentine home, at 1 Papermill Road, Roslyn, dates from 1787 and has been restored to resemble the home as it appeared when built.

The two museum rooms, completed and decorated by donations from interested citizens will be open for viewing. The rooms are furnished in period and have excellent examples of both furniture and accessories of that time.

The restoration of the Wm. Valentine home offers Roslyn Village a larger meeting room, sufficient office space and is a Village Hall which is a credit to the community and a landmark for all to know and appreciate. Visitors may personally see



The Valentine Home

the fine job that has been accomplished by the present administration. Ladies are requested not to wear spike heels as the floors are soft pine and are easily damaged. Refreshments will be served.

ROSLYN NEWS OCT. 2, 1963

Roslyn News - October 1963-The Village Hall moved to the William M. Valentine House – Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

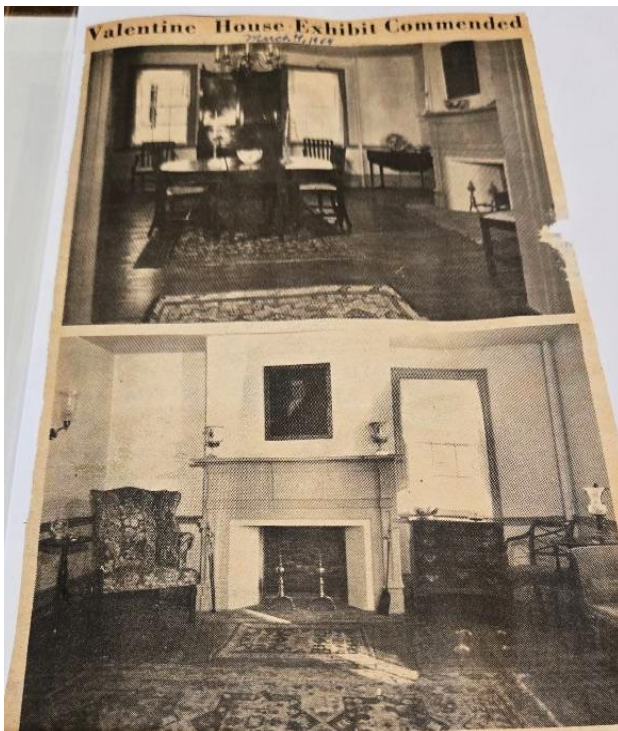
Under the supervision of architect Gerald R.W. Watland, the restoration focused on returning the ground floor rooms in the original section of the house to their circa 1800 appearance. All 20th-century modifications were removed, including a later addition—never replaced—along with large, enclosed porches and World War I-era French windows.



1962-63 - the WM Valentine house restored – Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

The original windows were restored, concealed paneling and doors were uncovered and refurbished. Missing architectural elements were identified and reinstalled, ensuring the house retained as many original features as possible.

The Roslyn Landmark Society played a key role in furnishing the newly restored museum rooms, sourcing period-appropriate hardware and acquiring furniture representative of the early 19th century.



The furniture was provided by the Museum of the City of New York, offering visitors an authentic glimpse of the home's past, as seen in this newspaper clipping from 1964. The rooms were dismantled in 1987-88.

e. 1968 Relocation

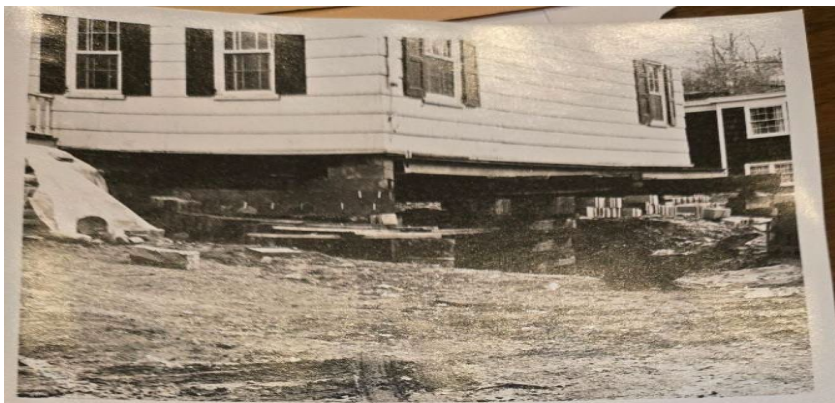
The house was moved to make room for Bryant Library (Memorial Building) expansion. The building was lifted off its original foundation, placed on skids and moved from the west side of the Bryant Library across Paper Mill Road, altering its original site orientation but preserving the building itself.



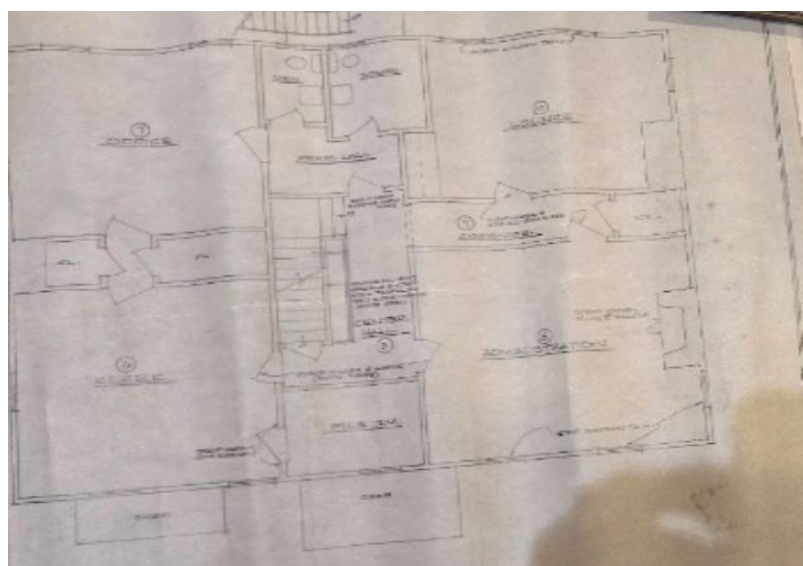
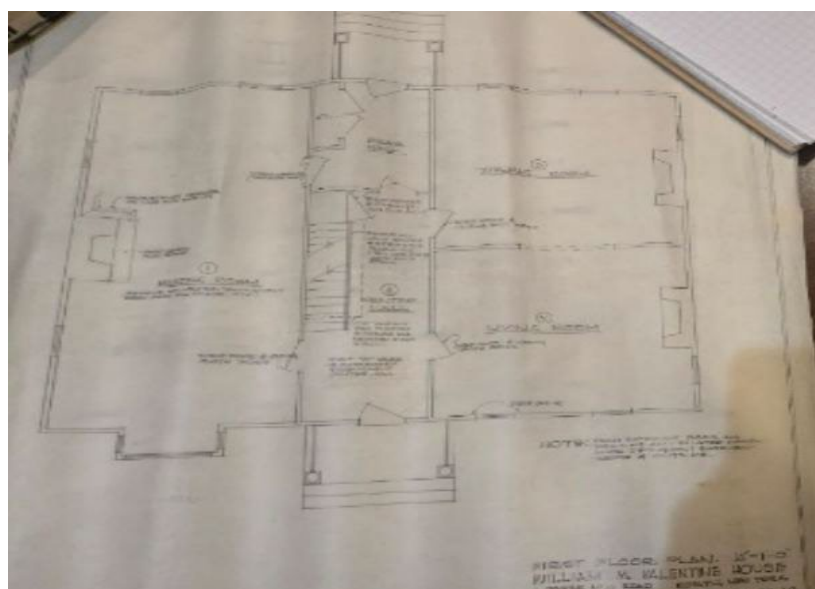
*Newspaper clipping – Moving day for the Valentine house October 30th, 1968. -
Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection*



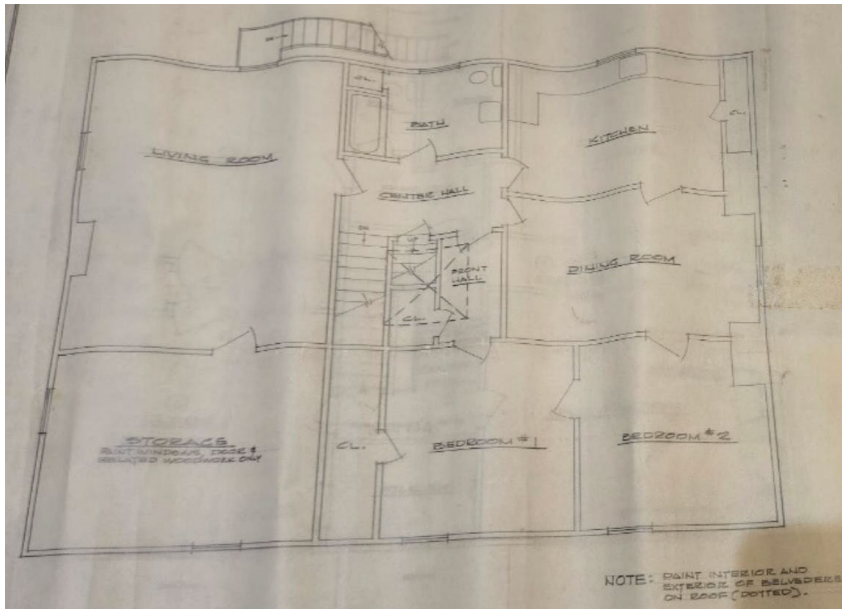
November 7, 1968 - Village Hall Takes a Ride - Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection



Various pictures on the William M. Valentine house's move – November 1968
Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection



**Floor Plans drawn in 1969 by Architect Guy Ladd Frost –
First floor and Second Floor – when it was used by the Village Hall
Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection**



Third Floor plan drawn in 1969 by Guy Ladd Frost, Architect – When used by the Village Hall - Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

1979: William M. Valentine house was included into the Building structure inventory at the Division for Historic preservation, New York state parks and recreation.

1986: NY State Division for Historic Preservation included the Willam M. Valentine house into the Roslyn Village Historic District, filed in March 1986, with the historic and natural districts in the division for Historic Preservation, NY State Parks and Recreation.⁶ See [sources](#) for detailed documentation.

Excerpt from the 1986 Inventory report:

The Roslyn Village Historic District is historically and architecturally significant as an intact and cohesive enclave of historic buildings and streetscapes which illustrate Roslyn's seventeenth-and eighteenth-century settlement as well as its nineteenth and early twentieth century growth and development. Predominantly residential in character, the district features significant examples of vernacular house types and styles dating from c. 1680 to 1930, as well as several distinguished architect-designed buildings, including a monumental Victorian period clock tower, a Georgian Revival style library, church and theatre. Landscape features within the district, including a park and two eighteenth-century mill ponds, contribute to the district's visual setting and preserve evidence of historic industrial activity at the center of the village.

⁶ NY state Division for Historic Preservation - Roslyn Village Historic District - March 1986

Due to continuing and increasingly intensive development in the greater Roslyn Area, the Roslyn Village Historic District is significant in the context of the multiple resource area as the only large concentration of historic buildings and streetscapes to survive within the village.

f. 1993-1995 Renovation

When the Village Hall moved to new headquarters, damage and disrepair were assessed. The library took legal proceedings against the village for what library officials contended was negligence in addressing the deteriorating condition of the house. Negotiations between village and library officials agreed on a settlement that covered the \$45,000 estimated cost of the required repairs of which roofing and exterior painting were the most significant portion. The village also agreed to pay an additional \$5,000 if the cost of roofing repairs exceed \$16,000. A \$49,000 federal grant was also received for renovation costs.⁷

At that time a feasibility study was prepared by Steven Zalben Architect ⁸([See source](#)) to study the possible future of the house.

⁷ Scotchie, Joe - Roslyn News, January 4, 1996 “Uses for Valentine House still on Drawing Board” - Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

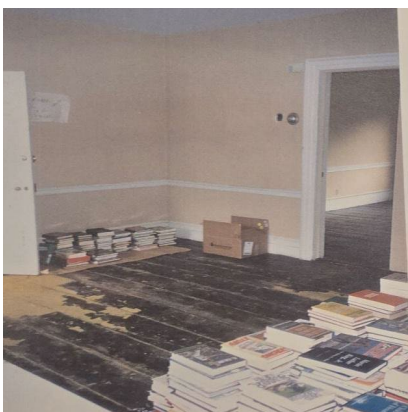
⁸ Zalben, Steven - Valentine House Feasibility study - November 1993 - Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

He addressed three main topics regarding the Valentine House: moving the Valentine House from its existing location, assessing the existing conditions of the Valentine House, and exploring the potential uses of the Valentine House by the Bryant Library.

The existing conditions revealed numerous issues, including leaks, damaged ceilings, and outdated electrical systems.

The study also explored potential uses for the house by the library, suggesting that the main floor could be used for museum space or meeting rooms, the second floor for offices, and the basement for reading rooms or stacks. However, accessibility and structural reinforcement were significant concerns. The study proposed a direct connection between the Valentine House and the main building, possibly through a below-grade passage, and suggested additional parking solutions. It also explores moving the house. Even though feasible, it will be at a cost of \$405,000 (in 1993).

Overall, the study emphasizes the need for careful planning and consideration of historical preservation and accessibility requirements for the future of the house.



Outside and inside pictures of the William M. Valentine house before renovation in 1995 - Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection

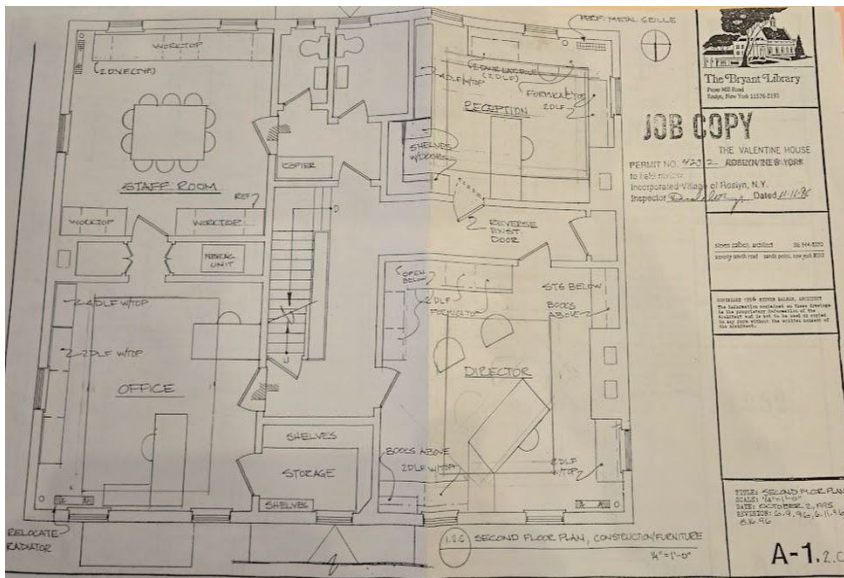
g. 1996: Renovation and ADA accessibility

At the time, the Bryant Library trustees eagerly considered the Valentine House as a potential location for meetings and the relocation of the Bryant Room local history collection. However, feedback from community planning members and library staff during meetings led the space committee to reconsider, determining that such a move might not be necessary.

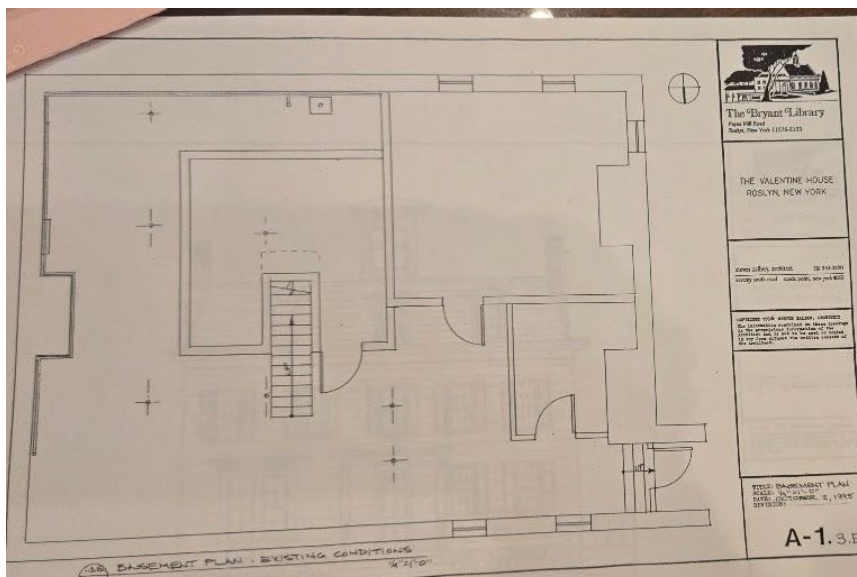
Discussions instead focused on utilizing the house primarily for administrative offices on the second floor, with the basement designated for storage. Renovations were undertaken. Given its potential use as public accommodation, ADA compliance was required.

However, the study clarified that full accessibility to every space on each floor was not mandatory; "reasonable accommodation" was sufficient if direct access was impractical or prohibitively expensive.⁹

⁹ Zalben, Steven - Valentine House Feasibility study - November 1993 -
Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection



1996-Renovation – 2nd Floor – by Steven Zalben, Architect. Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection



1996-Renovation – 3rd Floor- by Steven Zalben, Architect. Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection



ADA ramp and ADA bathroom on the first floor as they exist in 2025 – Photographs by Florence Westergard

1998 Conversion: The house was adapted as part of the Bryant Library Annex, with modern amenities introduced while retaining its historical character.

8. Physical Description and Current Conditions

The William M. Valentine House is a two-story and a half structure featuring a combination of Federal and Italianate architectural styles.

Its room size, ceiling height, and decorative detailing indicate that it was constructed for a prosperous owner. The house received extensive renovation and was meticulously restored in 1962-63, and between 1995 and 1998. Today, the house is one of the best-preserved residences in Roslyn.

a. Exterior



Foundation: Original with modern supports due to the 1968 relocation.

Cladding: Clapboard siding, consistent with Federal-style homes with modest detailing. Three-bay side entrance facade, characteristic of Federal style homes

Windows and Doors: Symmetrically placed, original six-panel front door with a bentwood-detailed transom.

The front doorway is simple but gracefully executed in



Federal detail, utilizing a large six-panel door which has molded edges only on the two small upper panels.

There is a simple overdoor window which is decorated with bent wood muntins, which are supported at their intersections with small cast lead decorations.

In 1962, it was possible to re-acquire the original front door and doorway.

*Front door and Porch of the
WM Valentine House-
Photographs by Florence*



Shutters: During the 1962 restoration, paneled shutters, either original or newly made, were installed on the first-floor windows, while period-appropriate louvred shutters were fitted on the second story. This historically accurate arrangement, which provided security for the accessible lower windows and ventilation for the upper ones, remains in place today.



Roof: The slate mansard roof and dormers, added in 1865, reflect the Italianate modifications.

Photograph by Florence Westergard

During the 1865 enlargement of the house, the original roof was removed and replaced with a tall mansard roof, typical of the period, allowing for a full-height third story. A glazed belvedere was added to the roof's peak. To accommodate the new roof height, both original chimneys on the east end were extended and finished in the style popular at the time. A matching chimney was added on the west end, which served only the first-floor ballroom/drawing room fireplace.

Belvedere:

The inside is unpainted.

The area was renovated in 1993-95.

In 2025, it looks like a sound structure with half-round windows. Some are operational. The floor looks original.



Flooring in the belvedere – Photographs by Florence Westergard

Porches:



North Porch



South Porch

North Porch: Porch with simple detailing, contributing to the residential aesthetic. Per the 1964 report, the porch apparently was extended forward but retained a classic flavor which antedates the Civil war.

South Porch: There is structural evidence that a porch was originally there and that the shape and the width of the roof was the same as that of the present.

Bay Window to the West of the front porch:

The structure is depicted in the illustration from the Valentine Family History dating to the early 1870s. However, it features different window framing from the rest of the Civil War-era addition, suggesting it may have been constructed a few years later.



*Bay window west of the door –
Photograph by Florence Westergard*



Metal storm windows have since been installed (no date) on the exterior, though the original windows remain intact behind them. Some wood shutters are also missing.

b. Interior:

The interior of the original house has survived almost intact.

The main floor consists of a corridor, a meeting room and 2 rooms, one used for the Library Annex bookstore. During the 1996 renovation an ADA bathroom was added and a kitchenette. The rooms have been well maintained, retaining its historic fabric. Flooring is in a process of restoration as wear and tear have been observed.

The second floor consists of offices and two toilet facilities.

The third floor is an apartment, currently occupied by a caretaker.

Parlor:

It retains reeded pilasters and gouged sunburst motifs on the mantelpiece.



Foyer: Features an original transom window.

Kitchen:

It has been updated during its 1996 adaptive reuse. The kitchen was located on the second floor and was in poor condition.



Undated photo of the kitchen, likely from the 1960s based on the appliances. Courtesy of the Bryant Library Local History Collection.



Kitchen area now on the first floor- Photograph by Florence Westergard

Moldings:

Simple moldings and understated decorative features typical of the federal style. Some of the windows on the first and second floor are paneled beneath the frames, utilizing ogee moldings. As the building is in use, it is difficult to locate all those windows. The base moldings are flat stock wood composite with an ogee top, appropriate for the period of the building.



*Window frame in drawing room Base molding in the drawing room
Photographs by Florence Westergard*

Flooring:

The original wide pine floorboards are in place on the first two floors, although those of the first story drawing room (or ballroom) were, until the 1962 restoration, covered with later hardwood floors. The rest of the floor would have been carpeted. They are all exposed now and going through some restoration (2025).



Flooring First floor

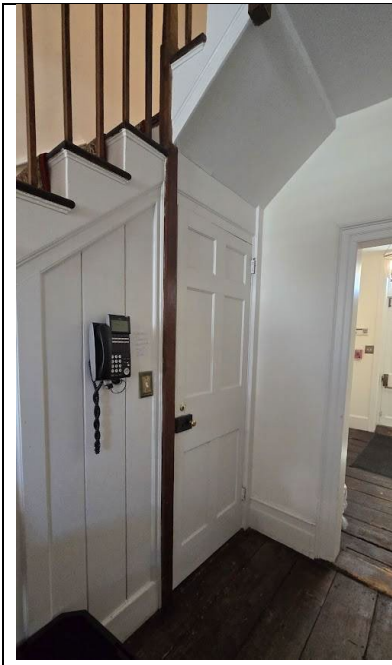
Photographs by Florence Westergard

Flooring Second floor

Paneling:

The Federal style paneling under the stairway has also survived although it was covered with plaster until the 1962 restoration.

Similar paneling enclosing the third story stairway has survived.

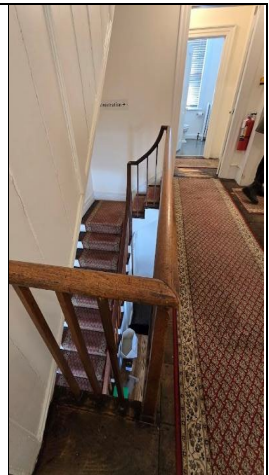
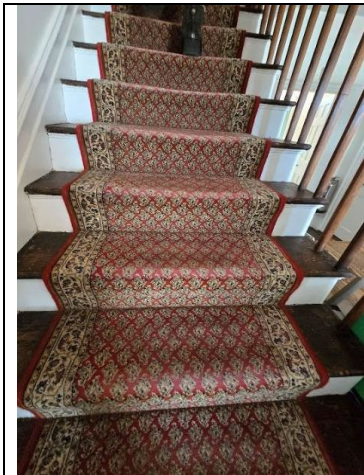


First Floor Paneling



Second and Third Floor Paneling

Stairway: The principal stairway, which crosses the rear wall of the entrance hall, is especially graceful.



It utilizes a simple square, tapering newel of mahogany with similar secondary newels of cherry. The round stair-rail is also mahogany, but the square balusters are cherry. This use of mahogany and local wild cherry, popularly called "Poor Man's Mahogany" aimed to achieve the maximum in elegance which the builder could afford. The stairs going to the second floor need attention as some areas need to be addressed.

See the secondary newel that extends downward



One of the secondary newels extends downward to the floor level to form a part of the cellar door frame. Another extends downward beneath the stair fascia.

This design technique is quite archaic in a house of this period. They go back to the early days of

the 18th century and demonstrate the persistence of early techniques in rural areas.

Another interesting feature of the original hallway was the division of the first and second story hallways into front and rear parts. This permitted the utilization of the rear hallways into extra small chambers.

Both the living room and dining room were heated by fireplaces, as was the large front chamber on the second floor.



*Second Floor Hallway-Photograph by
Florence Westergard*

In the 40s, the original front door and doorway, and the architectural detail of the living and dining room mantles were removed by the lessee of the house. During the restoration of 1962, it was possible to re-acquire the original front door and doorway, as well as the original architectural detail of the living room mantle. Those mantles still exist today.



The dining room mantle was accurately restored, utilizing new architectural detail applied to the original backboard. Photographs by Florence Westergard



The living room mantle as it appeared in 1987. Now the Library Annex bookstore (photo top right) and details of the fireplace.

Source: Bryant Library local history collection – Photograph: Florence Westergard



These pairs of mantles are excellent examples of the rural Federal style, and utilize carved sunbursts; shaped, molded mantel shelves; and reeded herring-bone decorative details.

The chair rails and baseboards in both living and dining rooms terminate in the mantle pilasters or colonettes.

Drawing room:

It is used now as a meeting place, a computer training room as well as children's activities.

This room filled all the main floor space to the west of the hallway. It might have served as a drawing room or even a ballroom, even though the pine floor would not have been appropriate for dancing.

The room has a corniced ceiling which is ten feet in height. The fireplace is a later addition after 1865 with marble and arche front in an Italianate style. It has a cast iron firebox and a hearth slab. The fireplace is ornate with a simple keystone flank with simple pillars ending with plinths.



Details observed in the drawing room - Moldings and fireplace
Photographs: Florence Westergard

Doors:



Doors styles throughout the house

Per the [1963 study](#)¹⁰, all the doors were original, except the rear entrance, and two of the interior doors of the second story hallway. But both doors are stylistically from the period with the original doors and are of Nassau County origin. The original doors have four panels, on both sides with ogee moldings.

Locks:

Various locks and doorknobs can be seen throughout the house. The 1963 report states that only one early (but not original) lock survived, that on the dining room door, which was covered with plaster. All the other doorknobs seem to be careful about modern reproductions. In 2025, this cannot be confirmed at this time.

¹⁰ William M. Valentine House - Built ca.1880 enlarged ca.1885. Guidebook - Note: no date of publication but it was assumed that it was produced in 1963-64 after the village Hall occupied the house.



Various locks and knobs throughout the house.

Photographs by Florence Westergard



On a structural basis, much of the early clamshell plaster has survived over the original hand split lathing to which it had been applied.

Picture – Example of Hand split lathing

9. 2025: Current Use

The William M. Valentine House retains its historic integrity, showcasing well-preserved Federal-style interiors alongside later Italianate exterior modifications.

Today, the building serves the public, seamlessly blending historic preservation with modern community use. It houses library offices, the Friends of the Library used bookshop, and a computer training and meeting room.

10. Historic Preservation Objectives and Recommended Improvements

The William M. Valentine House is preserved with the goal of maintaining its Federal-style interiors and Italianate exterior modifications, ensuring its historic integrity remains intact. It continues to serve as an office and meeting space for the Bryant Library Annex, allowing for active use while safeguarding its architectural heritage. Preservation efforts focus on retaining original woodwork, detailing, and structural stability.

11. Recommended Improvements and Treatments

To support the ongoing preservation and functionality of the house, the following improvements are recommended:

Structural Maintenance: Perform routine upkeep of the roof and cladding to prevent deterioration and preserve original window frames and flooring to maintain the house's authentic character.

Conservation of Architectural Features: Retain historic elements, including woodwork, mantels, and transom details, ensuring the building's distinctive period features are protected.

Weatherization of the Valentine House: As stated in NPS documentation, weatherization means implementing cost-effective measures to make the building more energy efficient without impacting the historic building design and materials. First an energy audit could be undertaken before implementation. This can be easily conducted by locating air leaks, insulation issues and inspecting heating and cooling equipment. Second, modify user behavior and finally develop a plan. [Weatherization of Historic Buildings - Technical Preservation Services \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#). Other sustainable elements could also be investigated such as solar panels. [Solar Panels on Historic Properties - Technical Preservation Services \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

Interpretive Enhancements: Expand educational programs and exhibits to engage the public and install informational signage highlighting the house's historical significance.

Adaptive Reuse: Enhance public programming while preserving the house's architectural and historical authenticity, keeping it a functional and educational community resource.

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14. Image Attribution

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- Cover Image of William M. Valentine House: Roslyn Landmark Society.
- All other pictures from Florence Westergard

The William M. Valentine House is one of Roslyn's architectural treasures—an enduring witness to over two centuries of local history. This report explores its transformation from a late 18th-century Federal-style home to an Italianate landmark, and its evolving role in the community. Through research, analysis, and preservation insight, this document offers a compelling look at the house's past and a thoughtful roadmap for its future.



Florence Westergard, originally from France, has lived in the U.S. since 1981. A freelance multimedia producer, she holds a Master's in Emerging Media and Technology from Empire State University and is currently pursuing studies in Public History and Historic Preservation. She works closely with the Roslyn Landmark Society, producing videos of tours, lectures, and events, and developed a community website to deepen public engagement with local history. She also created the Gerry StoryMap retracing the couple preservation involvement, also available on the Roslyn Landmark Society's website.